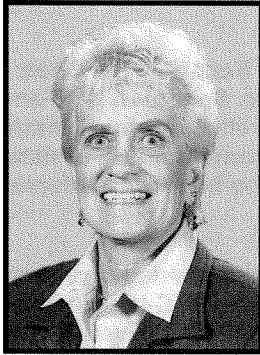


Hammerstrom's

for the people
in the 17th Senate District

Hotline



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January 31, 2005



FREE FISHING WEEKEND For two days this winter, February 19 and 20, Michigan residents and out-of-state visitors can celebrate Michigan's world-class freshwater fishing during the state's free fishing weekend. Michigan's Free Fishing Weekends are two special days when all fishing license fees will be waived for residents and visitors alike on both inland and Great Lakes waters. All fishing regulations still apply. In addition, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources would like to remind ice fishing enthusiasts that names and addresses must be affixed to ice shanties placed on public bodies of water. State law requires the shanty owner's name and address be permanently affixed on all sides of the structure before it is placed on the ice. The information must be provided in legible, waterproof lettering at least two inches high.

DID YOU KNOW? Michigan offers a wealth of fishing opportunities with more than 11,000 inland lakes and 36,000 miles of rivers and streams.

PLAN AHEAD FOR SAFETY The terrible tragedies caused by the recent earthquake and tsunamis in the Indian Ocean are a very real reminder that emergencies can strike at any time. While our hearts are with the victims of this catastrophe and our efforts are focused on helping the survivors recover, it is also a prudent time to think about your family's safety in the event of an emergency situation. Whether large or small, emergencies often occur without warning and it's easy to become panicked or confused. That's why it's important to be prepared—before an emergency happens—to stay safe. So involve the whole family and plan ahead. Discuss with your family the dangers of possible emergency events, including fire, severe weather, hazardous spills, and terrorism. Check around the house for potential hazards and take steps to make your home a safer place to live. Review your family preparedness plan regularly with your children. Because minutes matter in an emergency, planning ahead and being ready can better protect your family. If you would like an Emergency Planning Guide to share with your family, please call my office or visit my website to access the Family Preparedness Guide developed by the Michigan State Police Emergency Management Division.

NEW BILLS WOULD CREATE HOME HEATING FUND Legislation now before the Michigan Senate would help the state provide assistance to low-income residents to help offset the cost of heating their homes. Senate Bills 75 and 76 would create the Michigan Home Heating Credit Fund and implement an income tax return checkoff for donations. Money raised would be used to help close the gap between requests the state receives for home heating assistance and funding provided through the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. The bills were referred to the Senate Committee on Finance and are awaiting further action.

YOU EARNED IT! YOU KEEP IT MICHIGAN! It's tax preparation season once again. As Michigan residents prepare to file their annual tax returns, some will learn they qualify for an Earned Income Tax Credit. The EITC is a special tax benefit for people who work. If you qualify, you will owe less in taxes, and you may get cash back. Even if you do not owe income tax, you can get the credit—but you must file a federal tax return. Workers who qualify for the EITC and file a federal tax return can get back some or all of the federal income tax that was taken out of their pay during the year. Even workers whose earning is too small to owe income tax can get the EITC. To find out if you qualify for the EITC and how to claim the credit, please call toll-free, 1-800-865-8683, or visit www.michiganeic.org.

If you would like to receive future issues of Hammerstrom's Hotline via e-mail,
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